

THE PELL INSTITUTE
for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education

*Promising Practices
Supporting Low-Income,
First-Generation Students
at DeVry University*

May 2011

About The Pell Institute

For the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education

The Pell Institute, sponsored by the Council for Opportunity in Education, conducts and disseminates research and policy analysis to encourage policymakers, educators, and the public to improve educational opportunities and outcomes of low-income, first-generation, and disabled college students. The Pell Institute is the first research institute to specifically examine the issues affecting educational opportunity for this growing population.

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About The Council for Opportunity in Education

Established in 1981, the Council for Opportunity in Education is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to expanding educational opportunity throughout the United States, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Islands. Through its numerous membership services, the Council works in conjunction with colleges, universities, and agencies that host federally-funded college access programs to specifically help low-income, first-generation students and those with disabilities enter college and graduate.

The mission of the Council is to advance and defend the ideal of equal educational opportunity in postsecondary education. The Council's focus is assuring that the least advantaged segments of the American population have a realistic chance to enter and graduate from a postsecondary institution.

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Please note that the responsibility for the content of this report, including any errors or omissions, lies solely with the authors.

Executive Summary

Background

Promising Practices Supporting Low-Income, First-Generation Students at DeVry University offers a comprehensive description of the academic and social support systems for low-income, first-generation students attending a major four-year, for-profit, multi-campus university. College retention and success research has determined that effective support services succeed in retaining and graduating low-income, first-generation students by “acknowledging their backgrounds, needs, and expectations and then taking action to accommodate them” (Myers, 2003). Campuses like DeVry University do not have federal outreach such as TRIO Student Support Services, which are federally-funded programs designed to provide academic and social assistance for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. Consequently, the goal of this study is to identify the kinds of academic and social support services, if any, that a for-profit education institution like DeVry University provides. While data are not yet available that can determine the effectiveness of DeVry University’s recent support initiatives, the findings from this study highlight practices at DeVry that are grounded in the literature on effectively supporting low-income, first-generation students. These are practices that other for-profit institutions can look to emulate.

To develop this descriptive resource about for-profit education practices, The Pell Institute sought to identify promising approaches that aim to support low-income, first-generation students through academic, personal and financial support. We observed the practices at these institutions while drawing on our extensive research of the characteristics of successful institutional practices to support low-income, first-generation students. We found that many of the practices identified at DeVry are in the early stages, which is why their evidence of effectiveness is not yet substantiated in data. However, the feedback we received from administrators, staff, faculty and students provides insight into the typical experience of a low-income, first-generation student at a four-year, for-profit university—an experience which merits further consideration.

Method

The following broad questions framed our approach in the interviews and focus groups conducted during our site visits:

1. What are DeVry University’s approaches to recruiting underserved, low-income and first-generation students? How are these students targeted in high schools? Are there special pre-college programs developed to attract and support these students in the application process? What are admissions requirements, especially academic measures?
2. What types of academic or other support is provided beyond enrollment, for underserved, low-income, first-generation students?
3. How could DeVry University better serve its low-income, first-generation student population?

To answer these questions, The Pell Institute conducted a qualitative study of DeVry University Chicago to learn more about services offered to students, the majority of whom are low-income and the first in their families to attend college. The site visits to three Chicago area campuses consisted of interviews with staff, administrators, faculty, and focus groups with low-income students. Where available, we supported qualitative findings with data provided by the institution. Descriptive data utilizing national data sets support a literature review to provide further insights into four-year, for-profit student characteristics and outcomes in comparison with other sectors.

Promising Practice Findings

Based on our many years of studying the characteristics of successful institutional practices to support low-income, first-generation students, we found that some of the types of student support services established in the literature as setting a high standard for strategic academic and social student assistance are incorporated in the DeVry University structure. The following three categories frame what we identify as DeVry University's guiding strategies behind the supportive practices for their students:

- ***Approaching Support Services for Students as Customer Service***
- ***Providing Early, In-Depth, On-Campus Student Opportunities***
- ***Establishing and Sustaining a Shared Sense of Community***

These three overarching categories are distinctive because of the way in which the dynamic confluence of corporate business values and higher education practices come together to inform DeVry's educational culture. What is most promising about these categories is the calculated investment that DeVry University has made to weave together the practices, and how they continue to develop and refine these practices to better support their students, the majority of whom are low-income and first-generation.

Approaching Support Services for Students as Customer Service

Our research has shown that the success of many higher-performing colleges and universities is attributed to the personalization of the educational experience for low-income, first-generation students. In other words, valuing students as customers can establish an effective college success culture, especially for low-income, first-generation students. For DeVry, providing "world class customer service" entails treating students with "kindness and respect, taking the initiative to solve problems, and do simple things like walk students to classes or services they cannot find." Moreover, students at DeVry express that they appreciate feeling valued as a customer and receiving individualized attention from the staff, administrators and faculty.

Several essential elements of DeVry's promising practices for approaching support services as customer service include:

- ***One-Stop Shop Advising Model***
- ***Early Intervention/ Warning System***
- ***Degree Progress Tracking***
- ***Academic Success Centers***
- ***Career and Job Placement Service***

Providing Early, In-Depth, On-Campus Student Opportunities

Our research on student success continues to indicate that exposing low-income, first-generation students to college as early as possible enhances their ability to successfully navigate the college access process, and to persist and graduate from college with a degree. First-generation students often describe experiencing even greater anxieties and problems than other students in making the transition to college life, due to a lack of social and cultural capital. However, involvement with pre-college programs helps students anticipate common anxieties by acclimating them to college life early. Moreover, first-generation students have emphasized that the personal relationships and trust that they develop with program staff in pre-college programs allows them to be receptive to support that helps them get into and through college.

Among the promising ways that DeVry provides early, in-depth, on-campus student opportunities include:

- ***StartNow Dual Enrollment***
- ***DeVry University Advantage Academy***
- ***Foundations Coursework***

Establishing and Sustaining a Shared Sense of Community

In several Pell Institute studies, we have recommended that campuses establish and sustain a sense of shared community, to foster a campus culture and environment that encourages students to take ownership of their academic experience, to participate as active citizens of the institution, and to use their education to improve their individual lives and those of their families and communities. This sense of ownership is also exhibited by the campus

presidents, administrators, staff and faculty at DeVry, in their collective belief in the value, capacity and potential of their students. Thus, all members of the campus community strive to send a clear and consistent message that if you “set the bar high and standards high, students will rise to them.”

DeVry establishes and sustains a shared sense of community in the following ways:

- *Collaborative Campus Programming*
- *Faculty Involvement*

Recommendations

Based on experience studying the characteristics of successful institutional practices to support low-income, first-generation students, we found evidence that the types of supportive practices known to be successful at other institutions are either in the early stages or already a part of the culture at DeVry University. While the findings we present identify a number of promising practices that support students at a for-profit institution, we recommend several improvements for DeVry University to enhance their practices and, ultimately, increase their student retention and success rates:

- ***Expand the use of disaggregated data to track the outcomes of low-income, first-generation students.***
Currently, DeVry institutes marketing measures typical of for-profit corporations to track levels of student engagement and satisfaction. While the student-as-customer philosophy may be effective at providing students with attentive and customized support, the university should implement more traditional postsecondary institutional measures of tracking student success. The university’s current focus on term-to-term persistence rates should be expanded to year-to-year persistence and six-year graduation rates for four-year degree seekers. DeVry should also regularly disaggregate these measures by student characteristics, particularly Pell Grant receipt or other indicators of income level, to assess the outcomes of this population high in need and dominant at the institution.
- ***Establish greater transparency around student services and outcomes.*** The practices identified here, while supportive, are invisible to the average consumer

through publicly available materials such as the institutional website. Without conducting in-person visits, one may not be aware of institutional scholarships or initiatives such as Student Central. Additionally, information about student success rates – both overall and tied to recently implemented support practices – is not easily obtainable. Such information is critical to meeting the needs of students, parents, and educators identified below as they navigate the college access process.

- ***Clarify and reconsider rigid attendance tracking policies.*** While closely monitoring low-income, first-generation students who are generally at risk of dropping out is crucial, the students we met with were unclear about attendance withdrawal policies. In addition, the students – many of whom are nontraditional-aged working adults with families – felt the policies bordered on overly intrusive. DeVry academic sessions are short and intensive and therefore require regular class attendance. However, if a student misses two classes, they are automatically dropped and must obtain a faculty letter within one week to appeal the withdrawal process and be reinstated. Students had varying understandings of the exact number of excused absences allowed and the time allotted for appeal. In addition, students did not know whether they could attend class during the appeals process, thereby potentially missing an additional week of class. While this policy has good intentions, it must be communicated more clearly during orientation or through the mandatory Student Central academic advising sessions. Students must be made aware of the risks and financial ramifications. In addition, DeVry may wish to offer the possibility of making up a class – either by meeting with faculty in person or online, or by reviewing coursework at the tutoring center. DeVry can begin examining this policy by analyzing the effects of absences and withdrawals on overall success rates.
- ***Consider implementing additional programs and services supported by the research, such as learning communities and supplemental instruction, proven to be effective for this student population in other sectors.*** DeVry has already taken significant steps to better support low-income, first-generation students. Once external evaluators can determine the effectiveness of recently implemented

support systems within DeVry's for-profit structure, the university can more easily incorporate additional mechanisms that facilitate student success.

- ***Strategically acknowledge staff and faculty who excel in their efforts to support low-income, first-generation students.*** While DeVry staff and faculty generally seem to embrace the need to support this student population, systematically formalizing the acknowledgement and reward of personnel who embed this support into their everyday practice would further cultivate the promising practices on their campus.

Implications for Institutions

While data are not yet available that can determine the effectiveness of DeVry's supportive practices, similar institutions should consider the strategies guiding the implementation of these services, which are grounded in the literature on effectively supporting low-income, first-generation students. Other four-year, for-profit institutions can learn from the implementation of supportive practices within a similar structure and framework. Investing resources in such services—particularly if those services are tied to higher success rates—can help for-profit institutions validate their high tuition costs.

Implications for Parents, Guardians and/or Students

Because of the high cost of tuition at for-profit institutions, parents, guardians and students should expect that in addition to adequate financial aid, any for-profit higher education institution they consider attending offers the range of student support services for low-income and first-generation students that constitute the promising practices at DeVry University, at minimum.

Implications for Counselors and College Access Professionals

Because of how important “college match” has become in the college selection and decision process for low-income and first-generation students, pre-college counselors and other College Access and Success professionals need to advise their students to become better informed about the promising student support service practices such as those established at DeVry University, as a key measure in their college match criteria.

Implications for Policy and Research

Because higher education institutions must become more competitive in enrolling and successfully graduating more low-income, first-generation students in order for the nation to increase its college degree attainment ranking, education policy should be designed to incentivize campuses that implement an array of student support services such as those that we found as promising practices at DeVry University. Further research should explore the efficacy of such practices identified, as data become available.

represented major programs including business, health sciences, computer information sciences and liberal arts. All students were low-income and first-generation, and in some cases had been through extreme circumstances such as homelessness or drug addiction. The majority of the students we met with were upperclassmen planning to graduate within the next two years (see limitations, below). Students ranged in age from 18 to 51 and represented a variety of academic programs including: business management, multimedia design, engineering, business administration, accounting, computer information systems, technology/database management, networking and systems administration.

The site visits yielded qualitative data which we then analyzed to identify factors common across all three campuses that either fostered or hindered student success. Where available, we supported qualitative findings with data provided by the institution. Prior to visits, we developed interview protocols that addressed the areas of interest specified in our research questions (see Appendix B). An initial literature review yielded limited findings on students in this sector. We therefore supported the literature review with descriptive data utilizing national data sets to provide further insights into students in this sector.

We selected three Chicago campuses that DeVry administrators indicated enrolled the highest portions of low-income and underrepresented minority students. We validated the campus demographics to the extent possible, although detailed data were not available. We focused on the Chicago area because of the Chicago Public Schools' (CPS) history with DeVry. DeVry was founded and is headquartered in Chicago, and has worked closely with CPS to serve low-income students. We approached the study with a general sense of the students being served by DeVry campuses in Chicago as being similar to those at CPS – namely, majority minority, low-income, first-generation, and academically underprepared. In addition, we were aware that DeVry Chicago Main had formed a partnership with CPS to provide dual-enrollment programming on its campus in a unique and successful program, the DeVry University Advantage Academy (DUAA). We sought to explore the elements at DeVry Chicago that made this program successful, and to examine what other innovations had occurred that might make DeVry stand out from other institutions in the for-profit

sector. Moreover, we sought to learn more about the typical student experience at a major for-profit institution, from enrollment through coursework to support services, given the relative dearth of literature on this sector.

Limitations

It should be noted that students with whom we met and conducted focus groups were not randomly selected. We asked administrators to select a diverse group of low-income students (Pell Grant recipients) and offered to provide lunch as an incentive for their participation. As is often the case with institutional site visits, however, staff selected the most involved students because they are the most likely to attend the focus group. These students generally feel a sense of connection and satisfaction with the institution, and are often top performers on track to graduate. In this particular case, many of the students we met with had excelled as tutors. Nonetheless, students did represent a diverse range of ages, race/ethnicities and were for the most part, as specified, low-income and first-generation college students. Therefore, while responses may be slightly skewed in terms of positive institutional perceptions, these students still faced challenges common to low-income students. And, as students who spend a great deal of time at the institution, they were familiar with the services available and had experienced the various types of support offered.

Summary

The following report begins with a review of the literature and analysis of data comparing low-income, first-generation students at proprietary schools to other sectors on measures such as retention and graduation rates. We then present detailed descriptions of programs and policies of admissions, academics and social support services provided by DeVry University on the campuses visited and institution-wide. We also provide students' perceptions of the university and any remaining challenges to their success. Finally, we identify both successful strategies and opportunities for improvement at DeVry, and recommendations based on our knowledge of promising practices at institutions serving similar populations of students. Ultimately, the report can provide guidance to any similar for-profit institution seeking to better support low-income, first-generation students.

Although the disproportionate concentration of low-income students in for-profit institutions raises concerns of institutional stratification in higher education, the primary concern involves the maximization of institutional profit from federal dollars with little accountability for student graduation rates and the gainful employment of graduates upon completion. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2010d), the six-year bachelor's degree completion rate for students who started at for-profit institutions in 2002 was 22%, compared to 55% at public four-year institutions and 65% at private four-year institutions. In contrast, the certificate and associate's degree completion rates of for-profit institutions are much better. For-profit institutions boasted a 58% completion rate for students starting in 2005 (taking into account certificates) while private and public institutions graduated students at rates of 48% and 21%, respectively.

Despite the high certificate and associate's completion rates, critics have questioned the quality of these degrees, due to correspondingly high loan default rates. While only accounting for 12% of degree-seeking undergraduates in fall 2009, students enrolled at for-profit institutions comprised 43% of all students that began federal student loan repayment in 2008 and defaulted by 2010 (Asher, 2010). Controlling for student demographics, a study by Guryan and Thompson (2010) found that students who enrolled at for-profit institutions were nearly two times more likely to default on student loans, compared with their peers enrolled in the public and private sector of higher education.

Both the low graduation rates at four-year institutions and the high default rates raise concerns about the waste of federal dollars and the harm done to students who take on considerable debt and have no practical way of repaying this financial burden. Student loan default can influence one's credit rating, impacting a student's ability to purchase a car, house, or receive future loans. Federal student loans have no statute of limitations, and future wages, tax refunds, and Social Security checks can be garnished by the government (Asher, 2010). In addition, private loans can become the responsibility of co-signers and remain collectable postmortem. In either case, declaring bankruptcy often does not relieve student loan debt.

The recent scrutiny and negative publicity surrounding for-profit education has created a perception that all proprietary institutions are amassing large profits and providing students with large debts and few tangible skills. We do not argue that this does not occur, but we cautiously suggest that for-profit education be examined more carefully. As we have detailed, the for-profit sector is quite diverse. However, much of the outcomes data on for-profit institutions categorize institutions in ways that may not accurately depict exactly what is occurring. As Kevin Kinser (2007) writes:

“There are thousands of proprietary institutions in the United States. They are a diverse set of colleges: Small schools with a few dozen students, huge institutions with dozens of campuses, wealthy universities with millions in market value, modest colleges with century-old traditions. Nevertheless, most of what one reads about the sector neatly ignores this. We hear about a rather narrow band of proprietary schools – corporate owned, degree-granting institutions – and not much else. We draw conclusions about the size, scope, and impact of the for-profit system with little awareness of the different institutional models that contribute to this picture. We are blind to trends. We miss significant developments.” (Kinser, 2007, p. B9)

As Kinser points out, adopting a homogenous perspective on for-profit education may prevent researchers, policymakers, and critics from adequately assessing what seems to be a rather diverse set of institutions serving a high proportion of students in need of support. Certainly, some institutions are more effective than others, as one would find in any sector. However, a black or white narrative that portrays for-profit colleges and universities negatively is dangerous and could inhibit the potential for learning from a myriad of practices and philosophies that for-profit institutions use to support and serve students, particularly those from low-income and racial/ethnic minority backgrounds. To date, very little research has focused on examining the programmatic practices and procedures of for-profit institutions, so very little is known about the manner in which students are supported at these institutions, both academically and personally.

Table 1 / Degree-granting institutions, by control and type of institution: 2000–2001 to 2009–2010

YEAR	ALL	PUBLIC		PRIVATE			
	TOTAL	4-YEAR	2-YEAR	NOT-FOR-PROFIT		FOR-PROFIT	
				4-YEAR	2-YEAR	4-YEAR	2-YEAR
2000–01	4,182	622	1,076	1,551	144	277	512
2001–02	4,197	628	1,085	1,541	135	318	490
2002–03	4,168	631	1,081	1,538	127	297	494
2003–04	4,236	634	1,086	1,546	118	350	502
2004–05	4,216	639	1,061	1,525	112	369	510
2005–06	4,276	640	1,053	1,534	113	408	528
2006–07	4,314	643	1,045	1,533	107	453	533
2007–08	4,352	653	1,032	1,532	92	490	553
2008–09	4,409	652	1,024	1,537	92	530	574
2009–10	4,495	672	1,000	1,539	85	563	636
% growth	7.5%	8%	-7.1%	-0.8%	-41%	103.2%	24.2%

Note / Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Changes in counts of institutions over time are partly affected by increasing or decreasing numbers of institutions submitting separate data for branch campuses.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, "Institutional Characteristics Survey" (IPEDS-IC:86-99), and Fall 2000 through Fall 2009. (This table was prepared September 2010.)

Table 2 / Enrollment and degrees conferred in postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV programs, by type and control of institution, and type of degree: 2008–09

SELECTED CHARACTERISTIC	ALL TITLE IV PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS	DEGREE-GRANTING INSTITUTIONS			NON-DEGREE-GRANTING INSTITUTIONS		
		PUBLIC	PRIVATE		PUBLIC	PRIVATE	
			NOT-FOR-PROFIT	FOR-PROFIT		NOT-FOR-PROFIT	FOR-PROFIT
Enrollment, fall 2008							
Total	19,574,395	13,972,153	3,661,519	1,469,142	119,956	23,204	328,421
4-year institutions	12,131,855	7,331,809	3,626,168	1,173,459	40	379	0
2-year institutions	7,100,631	6,640,344	35,351	295,683	52,841	11,004	65,408
Less -than-2-year institutions	341,909	†	†	†	67,075	11,821	263,013
Degrees conferred, 2008–09							
Total	3,851,373	2,285,332	842,202	419,599	68,143	18,110	217,987
Certificates	805,755	360,593	13,915	127,148	68,143	18,110	217,855
Associate's degrees	787,466	596,098	46,929	144,298	9	0	132
Bachelor's degrees	1,601,368	1,020,435	496,260	84,673	0	0	0
Master's degrees	656,784	308,206	285,098	63,480	0	0	0

† Not applicable.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2008, 2009, and 2008–09 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Winter 2009–10, Spring 2009, and Fall 2009. (This table was prepared August 2010.)

Student Characteristics

Fig 1 / Four-year for-profit institutions enroll a higher share of low-income students than any other sector with the exception of two-year for-profit institutions, where nearly half (45%) are from the lowest income quartile. Nearly one-third (29%) of students at four-year for-profit institutions represent the lowest income quartile, only slightly higher than the share at public two-year institutions (26%) and public four-year institutions (24%). Private, not-for-profit four-year institutions are the least likely to enroll students from the lowest income quartile, where they make up one-fifth (20%) of the student population. Students of the highest income quartile are the least likely to enroll in for-profit institutions. The reverse is true at private, not-for-profit institutions, where high-income students represent a greater share than any other quartile (35%).

Fig 2 / Students at four-year for-profit institutions are more likely than those enrolled in other sectors to be non-traditional aged (over the age of 24), followed by two-year for-profits (48%) and community colleges (45%). Four-year for-profit institutions are the only sector where nontraditional-aged students are in the majority (66%).

Fig 3 / In addition to being older than students in other sectors, four-year for-profit students are also more likely to be independent. In fact, the vast majority at four-year for-profits (82%) are independent, followed by two-year for-profits (70%) and community colleges (57%). At more traditional four-year institutions, roughly one-third of students are independent. More specifically within dependency and marital status, students at four-year institutions are more likely than any other to have dependents (52%) followed by students at two-year for-profit institutions (46%) and community college students (32%). Far fewer students at public and not-for-profit four-year institutions have dependents (13% and 18%, respectively).

Fig 1 / Income Quartile by Institution Type

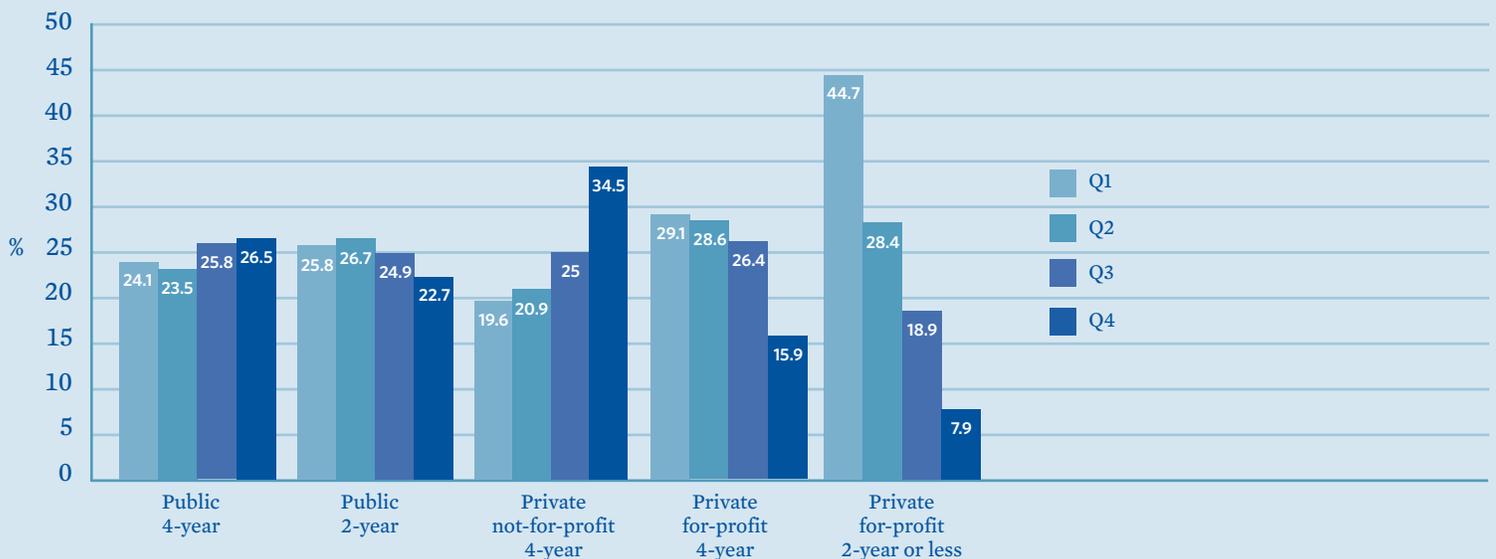


Fig 2 / Age by Institution Type



Fig 3 / Dependency and Marital Status by Institution Type

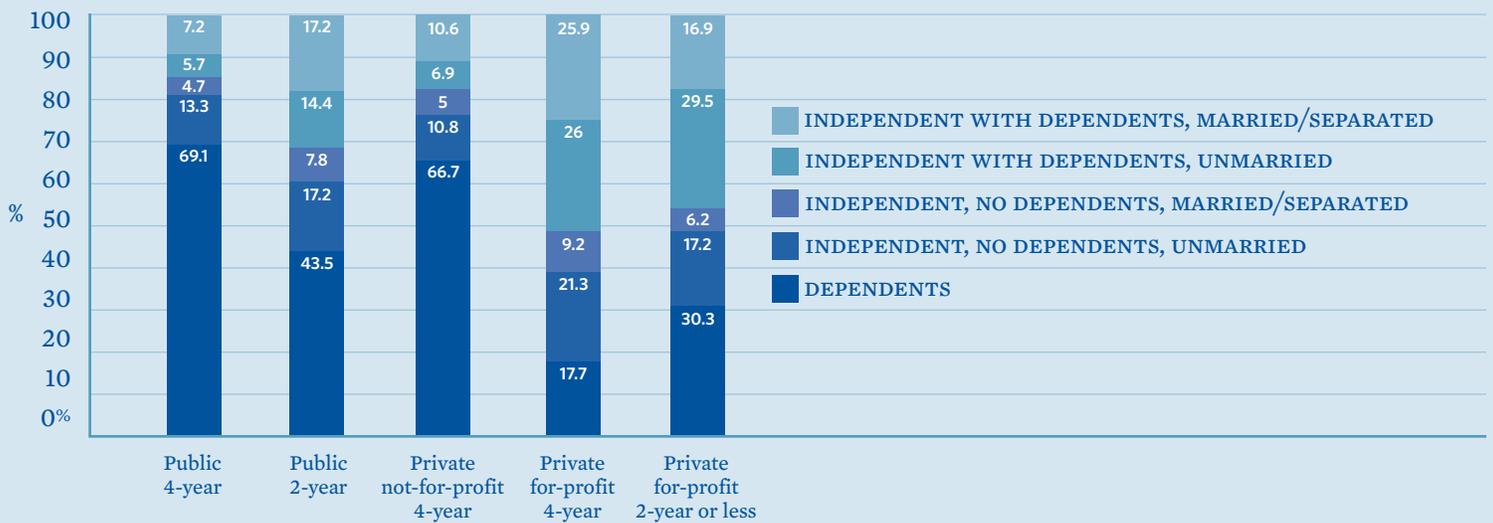


Fig 4-6 / The student populations at for-profit institutions are more ethnically diverse than any other sector. Roughly half at both two and four-year for-profits are of racial/ethnic minorities (58% and 48%, respectively). Of those, one-quarter are African American. Latino students are particularly prevalent on two-year for-profit campuses, where they make up over one-quarter of the share of students (26%). In addition to being more diverse, for-profit institutions have higher percentages of female students. While females are in the majority across sectors, they represent higher shares of students at four-year for-profit institutions (66%) and two-year for-profit institutions (72%). In addition to being low-income, students in the for-profit sector are the most likely to be the first in their families to attend college. Parents of roughly half at both four and two-year for-profit institutions (47% and 55%, respectively) have never attended college.

Employment and Enrollment Patterns

Fig 7 / Given that for-profit students tend to be older, independent and lower-income than peers in other sectors, they are more likely to be working full-time while enrolled – particularly those enrolled at four-year for-profit institutions where nearly half (49%) work full-time. Community colleges follow, with 41% working full-time. At two-year for-profits, however, it is interesting that only 28% work full-time, which is just slightly higher than the rate at not-for-profit four-year institutions (24%). At both four-year for-profit institutions and community colleges, only roughly one-fifth (21% and 19%, respectively) do not work off-campus, compared with approximately one-third at private not-for-profit four-year institutions, two-year for-profit institutions, and public four-year institutions (35%, 33%, and 29%, respectively).

Fig 4 / Race/ethnicity

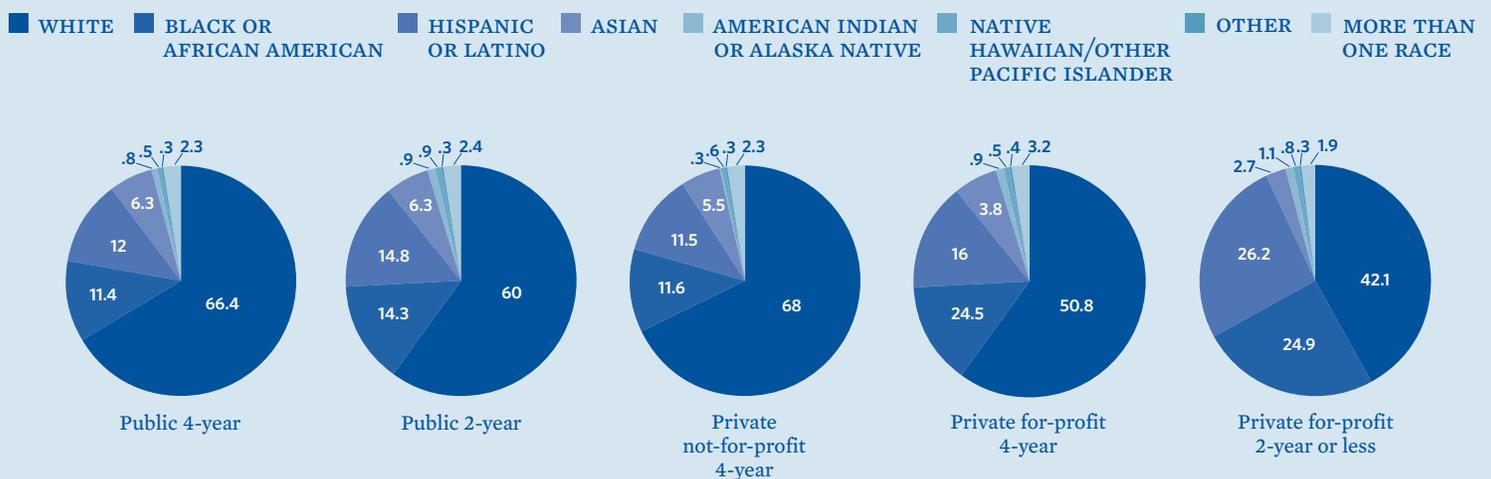


Fig 5 / Gender by Institution Type

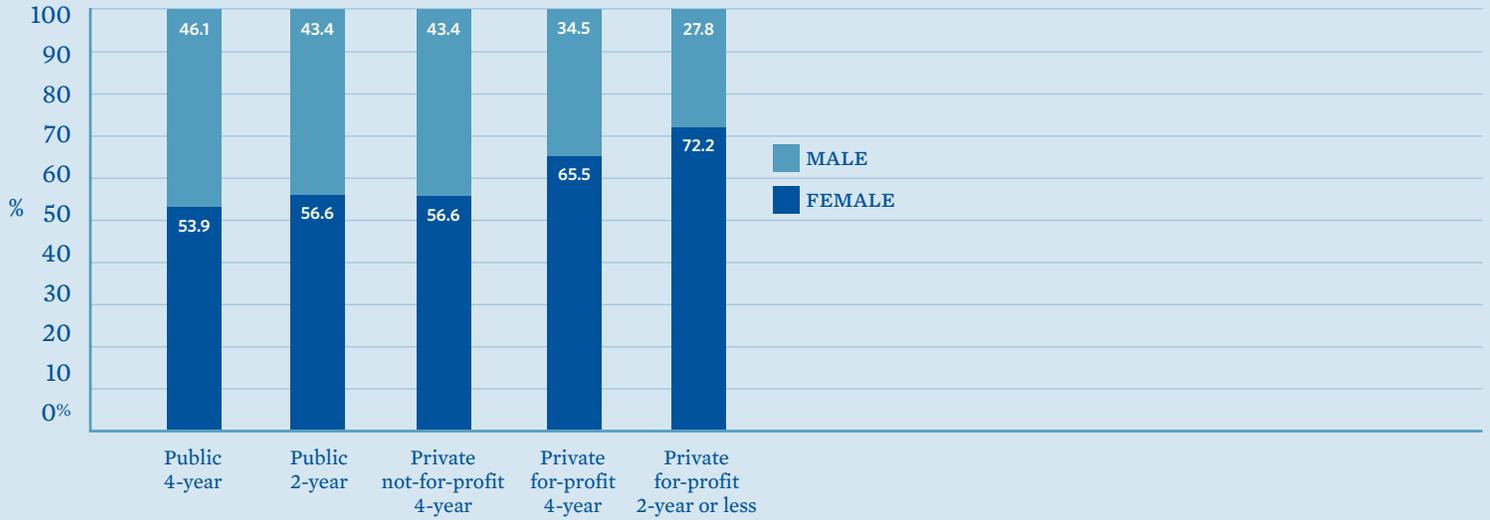


Fig 6 / Parent's Highest Education Level

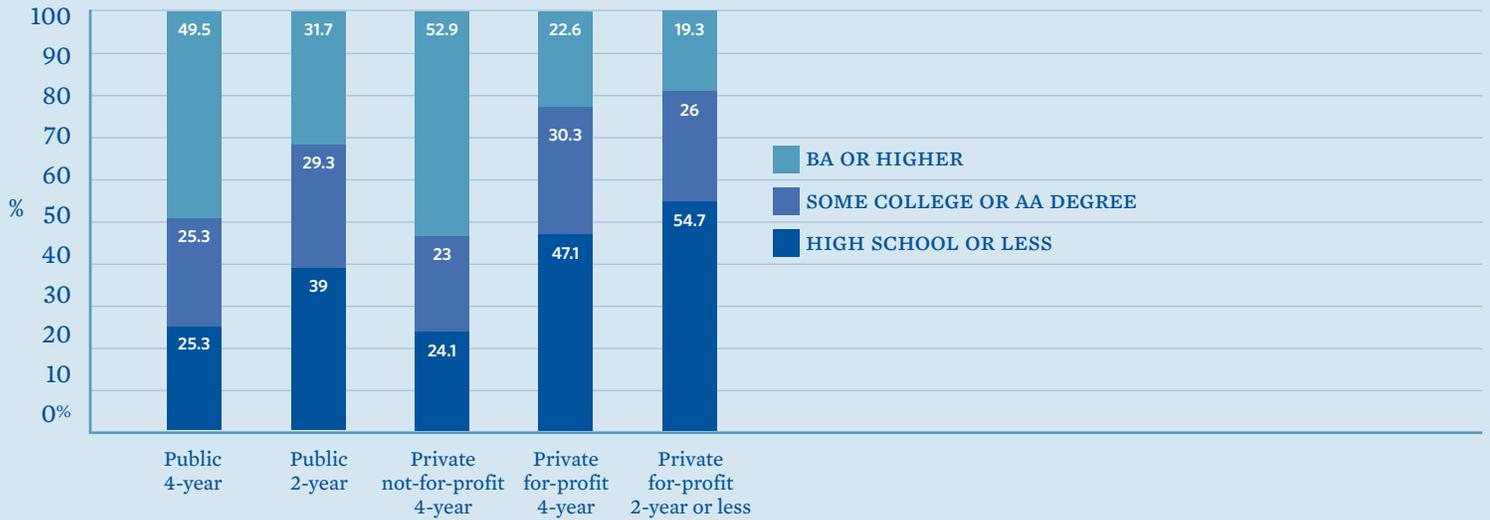


Fig 7 / Employment by Institution Type

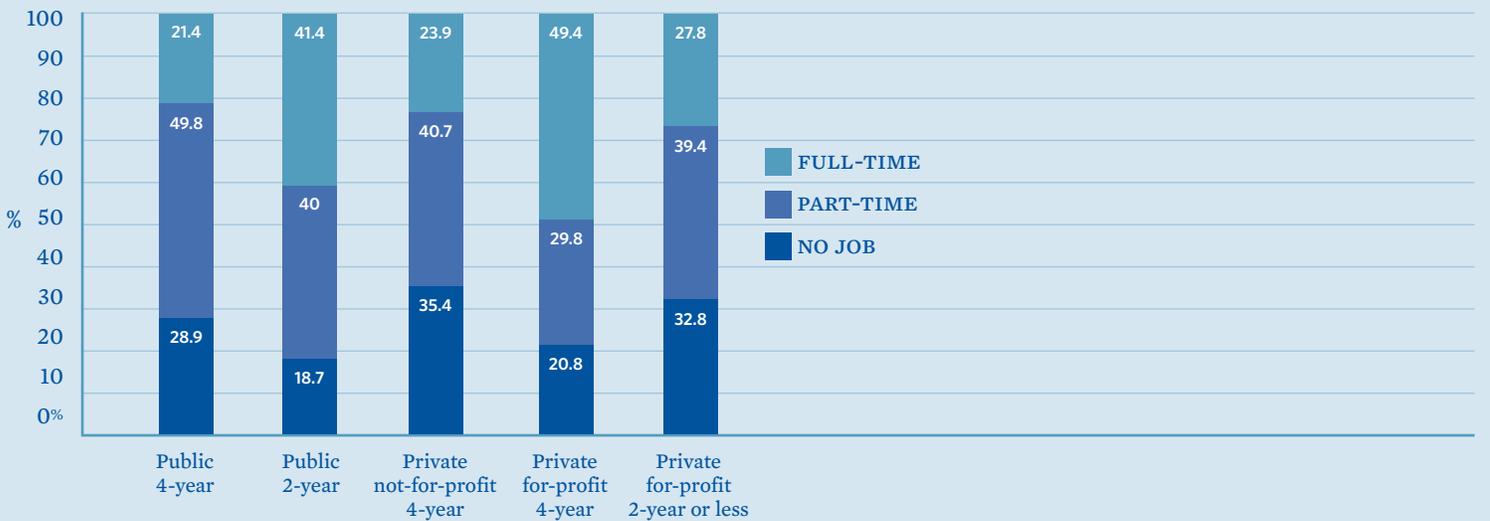


Fig 8 / Despite working longer hours than in other sectors, for-profit students are still highly likely to attend the institution full-time. In fact, the majority at for-profit four-year (66%) and two-year institutions (70%) attend full-time, roughly on par with those at private not-for-profit institutions (70%) and more than twice the rate of students at community colleges (27%). For-profit students may have a greater likelihood to attend school full-time due to either: more flexible class scheduling and delivery (online) options for working students; an often fast-paced curriculum; or in order to maximize financial aid.

Fig 9 / For-profit students are more likely than their peers in other sectors to delay enrollment in postsecondary education following K-12 completion, another risk factor as defined by the Department of Education as associated with attrition. Over half of students at both four and two-year for-profit institutions (54% each) delay entry into higher education, more than twice the rate at more traditional four-year institutions.

Fig 10 / Four-year for-profit students are the most likely to see themselves as an “employee who decided to enroll in school” rather than a “student working to meet expenses.” Roughly half of students at four-year for-profit institutions identify primarily as employees (48%), followed by 39% at community colleges and 32% of two-year for-profit institutions. While the share of students who identify primarily as students rather than employees is in the majority across all sectors, the portion is highest at more traditional four-year institutions.

Fig 11 / Perhaps unsurprisingly, due to the fact that four-year for-profit students are older, independent, working longer hours and more likely to identify as employees, they are also the most likely to have had prior employment before enrolling in postsecondary education (73%). Just as with the previous indicator of primary role, the percentage who worked prior to enrolling in higher education at for-profit institutions is only slightly higher than at community colleges and two-year for-profits (68% and 66%, respectively), while just over half of students at traditional four-year institutions worked prior to enrollment.

Fig 8 / Enrollment Intensity by Institution Type

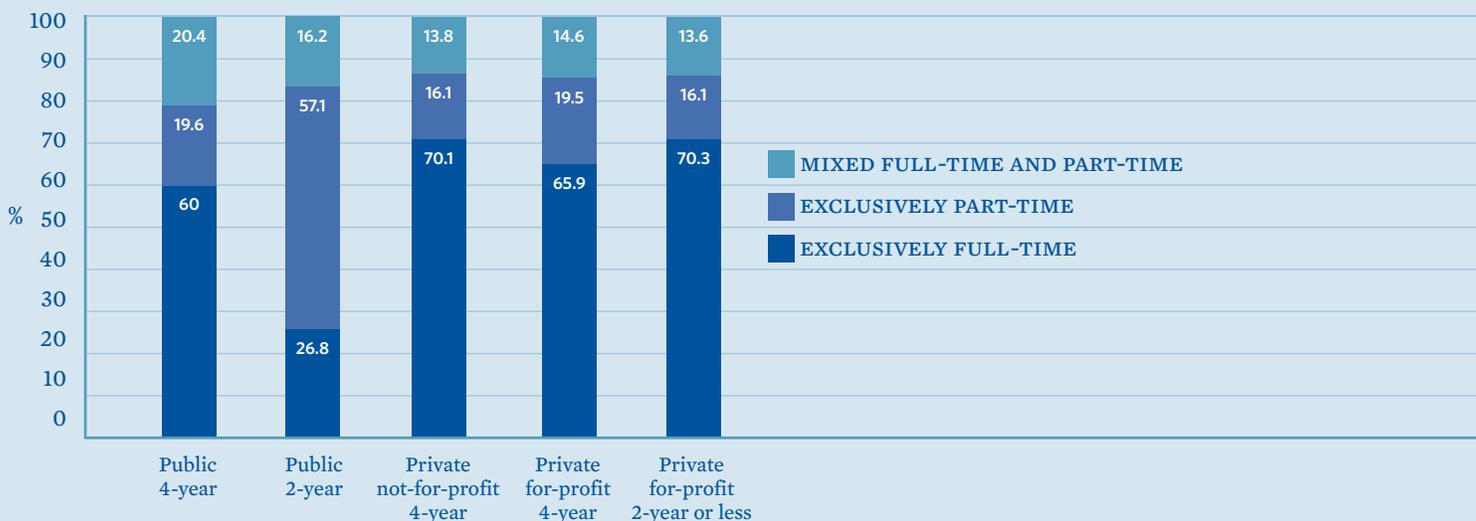


Fig 9 / Delayed Enrollment

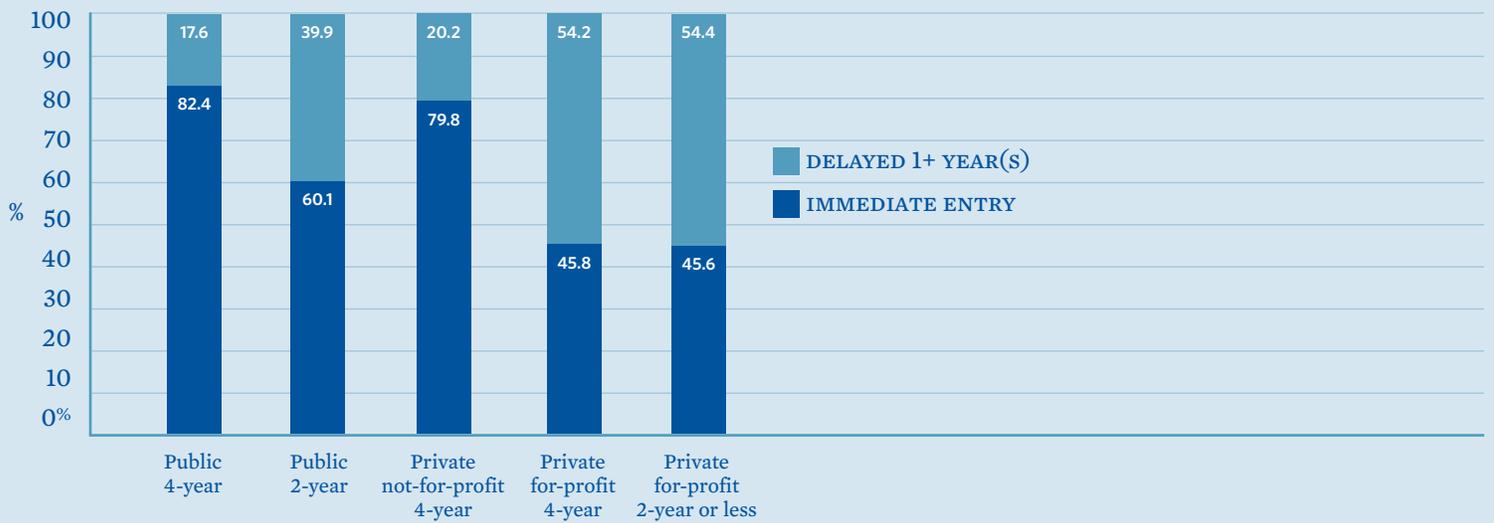


Fig 10 / Primary Role (Student or Employee) by Institution Type

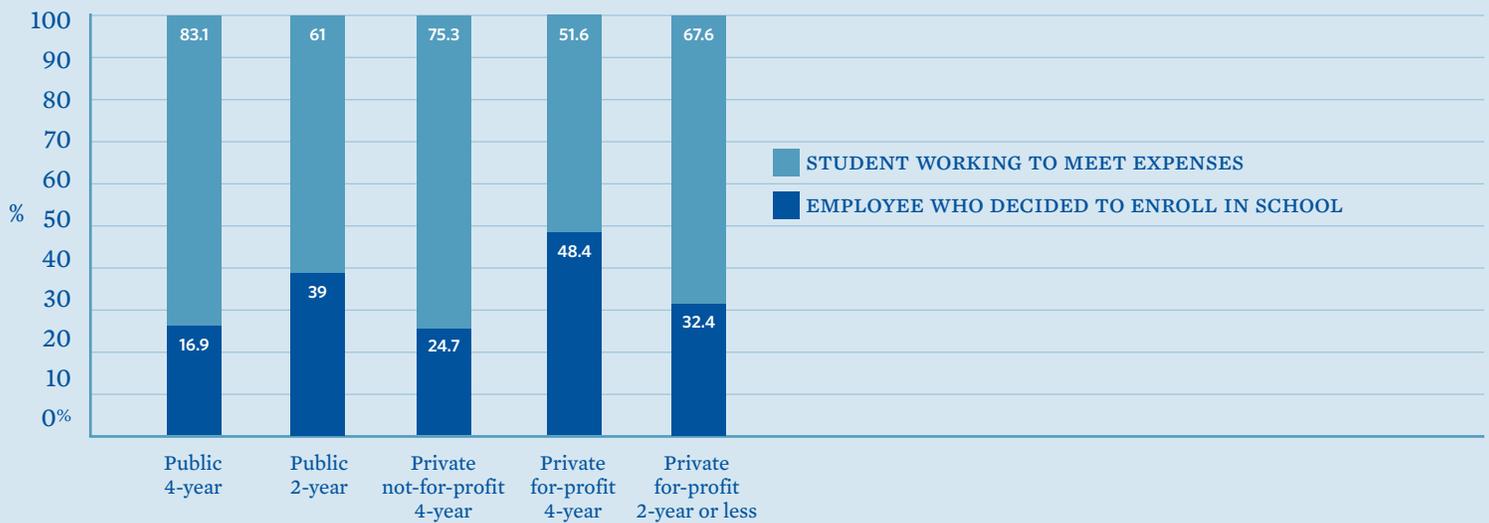
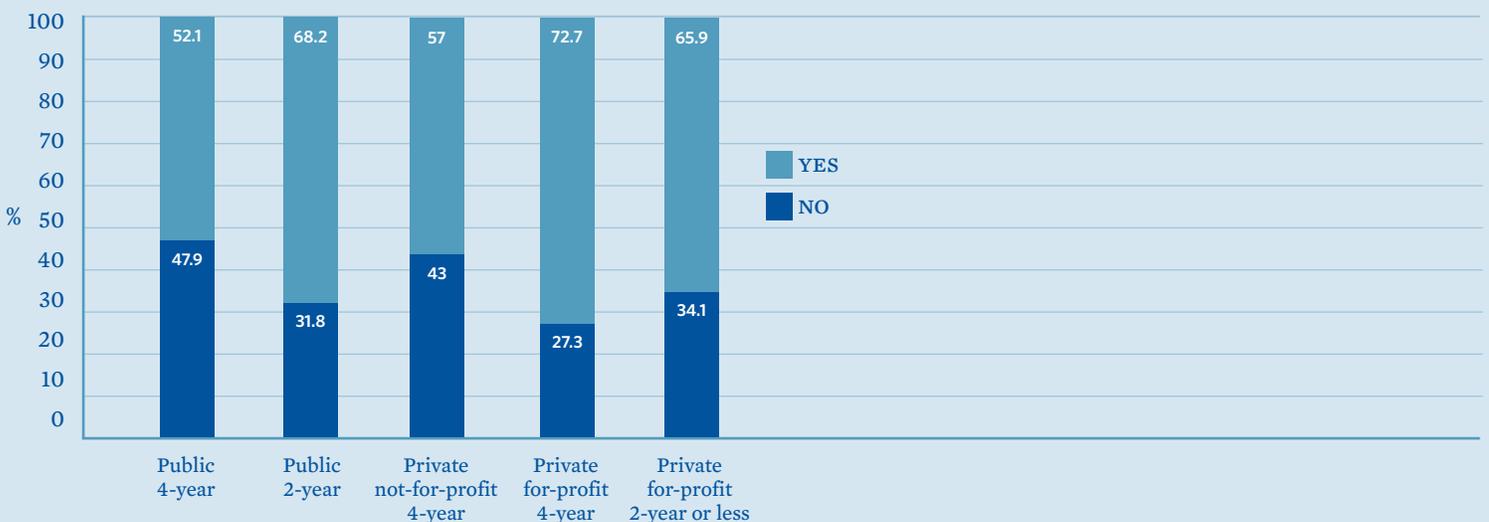


Fig 11 / Prior Employment by Institution Type



Cost of Attendance

Fig 12 / The average cost for students attending four-year for-profit institutions, including tuition, fees, books and supplies, and living expenses is just over \$31,000, roughly equivalent to four-year not-for-profit institutions. The figure below represents costs for in-state tuition and living off-campus, since the students focused on in this study are most likely to stay near their work and/or families for college, and not likely to live on campus. The cost of community colleges is roughly half as much as private four-year institutions, and public four-year institutions are approximately \$10,000 less than the private sector.

Table 3 / Nearly all students at four-year for-profit institutions apply for some form of financial aid, and for federal aid in particular (99% and 96%, respectively) – higher than any other sector. Two-year for-profit institutions follow closely behind, as do not-for-profit four-year institutions in overall aid. The majority of all students in all sectors apply for some form of aid.

Fig 13 / Due to the large population of low-income students, for-profit institutions enroll a higher share of Pell Grant recipients than any other sector. In fact, the majority at four-year for-profit institutions (58%) are awarded Pell Grants, compared with only one-quarter at public and private not-for-profit four-year institutions (25% and 26%, respectively). At the two-year level, for-profit institutions enroll a higher share of Pell recipients than any other sector (69%), while community colleges enroll the smallest percentage (21%).

Table 4 / Nearly all students at four-year for-profits receive some type of aid (98%) and federal loans in particular (94%), more than in any other sector. Students at four-year for-profits are also the most likely to receive private loans, although at lower rates (48%). Over half receive federal grants, compared with roughly a quarter at four-year institutions in other sectors. Students in other sectors are more likely to receive institutional aid, particularly at private, not-for-profit institutions where over half (52%) receive institutionally-funded grants.

Fig 12 / Average total cost for in-state students living off-campus 2009-10, by institution type: degree-granting, Title-IV institutions



Table 3 / Aid Application by Institution Type

INSTITUTION TYPE	APPLIED FOR ANY AID	APPLIED FOR FEDERAL AID
Public 4-year	78.6%	62.1%
Public 2-year	59.8%	43.5%
Private not-for-profit 4-year	87.7%	69.7%
Private for-profit 4-year	98.7%	96.4%
Private for-profit 2-year or less	97.1%	94%

Fig 13 / Pell Receipt by Institution Type

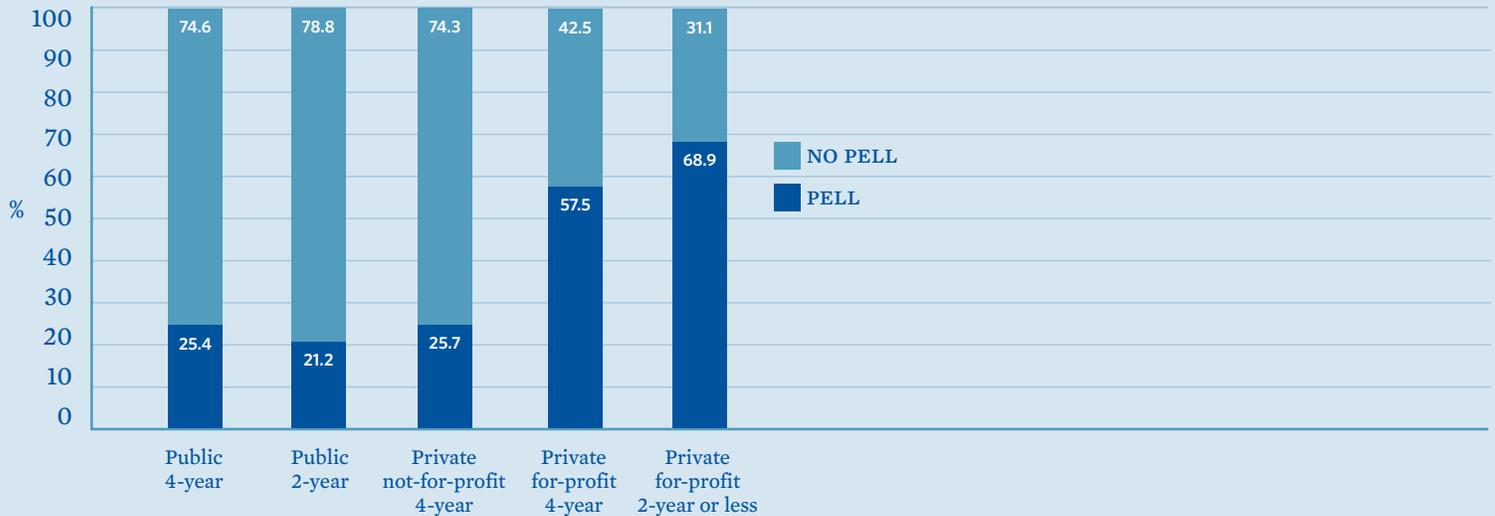


Table 4 / Aid Receipt by Source and Institution Type

INSTITUTION TYPE	ANY AID SOURCE	FEDERAL GRANTS	FEDERAL LOANS	PRIVATE LOANS	INSTITUTIONAL GRANTS	STATE AID	FEDERAL WORK-STUDY
Public 4-year	71.3%	25.7%	42.4%	15%	22%	23.9%	5.7%
Public 2-year	48.5%	21.3%	11.4%	5%	11%	12.4%	2.6%
Private not-for-profit 4-year	84.5%	26.3%	55.1%	25.7%	51.9%	25.2%	17.7%
Private for-profit 4-year	97.6%	57.6%	93.7%	47.4%	8.7%!	6.1%	2%
Private for-profit 2-year or less	95.2%	69.1%	82.9%	38.8%	5.5%	10.4%	1.6%

! Interpret data with caution. Estimate is unstable because the standard error represents more than 30 percent of the estimate.
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2007-08 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:08).

Table 5 / Students at private not-for-profit four-year institutions take out higher amounts of loans from all sources with the exception of institutional loans. Students at for-profit institutions borrow less from the federal government than students attending four-year institutions in other sectors. Community college students take out the least amount of loans, both public and private. Four-year for-profit students take out roughly the same amount of private loans as their counterparts at public four-year institutions, and nearly \$3,000 less on average than their peers at private not-for-profit institutions.

Table 6 / The total average aid amount ranges from \$3,589 (public two-year institutions) to \$17,226 (private not-for-profit four-year institutions). The total aid amount for for-profit institutions falls roughly in the middle (\$10,063 for two-year and \$11,585 for four-year for-profits). Average Pell Grant amounts do not vary a great deal between institution types.

Student Outcomes

Table 7 / When comparing student outcomes by institutional sector, it is important to separate four-year for-profit institutions such as DeVry from those awarding two-year degrees or less. In doing so, the six-year bachelor’s degree attainment rates are higher than

for students who begin at community colleges (16% compared with 12%, respectively). However, four-year for-profit institutions still have a higher dropout rate than any other sector. This is likely due to the demands facing students described above who are of the lowest income quartile, often working full-time, and attending courses as a secondary role to working. Two-year for-profits have the lowest six-year attrition rate, since these students face similar demands and primarily intend to complete certificates.

Fig 14 / National graduation rates are lower for low-income students than for more affluent peers. However, programs such as TRIO Student Support Services aimed specifically at supporting low-income students in college help this population attain higher success rates. After six years following initial enrollment in a post-secondary program, students that participated in the Student Support Services Program have a higher bachelor’s degree attainment rate (30.9%) than other low-income college students, regardless of whether they received (21%) or did not receive (8.9%) Pell Grants.

Table 5 / Average Loan Amounts By Source and Institution Type

INSTITUTION TYPE	TOTAL FEDERAL LOANS (includes PLUS)	TOTAL NON FEDERAL LOANS	INSTITUTIONAL LOANS
Public 4-year	6,380.90	6,269.20	3,256.90
Public 2-year	4,072.80	3,683.10	659.30
Private not-for-profit 4-year	7,559.20	9,129.90	3,037.80
Private for-profit 4-year	6,160.90	6,382.20	4,692.40
Private for-profit 2-year or less	5,861.10	5,545.10	2,592.40

! Interpret data with caution. Estimate is unstable because the standard error represents more than 30 percent of the estimate.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2007-08 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:08).

Table 6 / Average Aid and Grant Amounts By Source and Institution Type

INSTITUTION TYPE	AID TOTAL AMOUNT	FEDERAL PELL GRANT	INSTITUTIONAL GRANTS TOTAL
Public 4-year	9,361	2,830	3,617
Public 2-year	3,589	2,279	727
Private not-for-profit 4-year	17,226	2,842	9,388
Private for-profit 4-year	11,585	2,361	1,522
Private for-profit 2-year or less	10,063	2,530	1,807

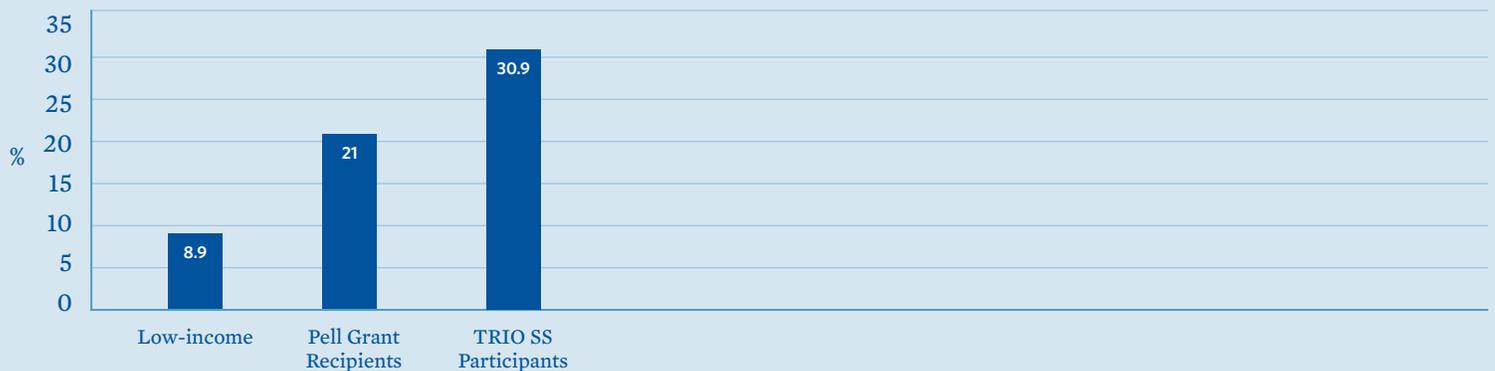
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2007-08 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:08).

Table 7 / Six-year Attainment/Enrollment Rates

ATTAINMENT OR LEVEL OF LAST INSTITUTION ENROLLED THROUGH 2009 BY FIRST INSTITUTION SECTOR (LEVEL AND CONTROL) 2003-04					
INSTITUTION TYPE	ATTAINED BA	ATTAINED AA	ATTAINED CERTIFICATE	NO DEGREE, ENROLLED	NO DEGREE, NOT ENROLLED
Public 4-year	59.5%	3.8%	1.6%	12.9%	22.2%
Public 2-year	11.6%	14.4%	8.5%	19.6%	46%
Private not-for-profit 4-year	64.6%	3.8%	1.5%	11.1%	19%
Private for-profit 4-year	15.7%	14.6%	3.6%	11.3%	54.8%
Private for-profit 2-year or less	0.3%	8.4%	39%	9.6%	42.6%

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, BPS:2009 Beginning Postsecondary Students

Fig 14 / Low-income, Pell Recipient and SSS Participant Graduation Rates



SOURCES: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1995-96 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, Second Follow-up (BPS:96/01); U.S. Department of Education, Federal TRIO Programs, Student Support Services, Performance and Efficiency Measure Results: 2004-05; Mortenson, T., Bachelor's Degree Attainment by Age 24 by Family Income Quartiles, 1970-2006 (2008), retrieved from www.postsecondary.org.

DeVry Loop (the Loop) Campus sits in the heart of Chicago's downtown "loop," occupying three floors of an office building for courses and support services. DeVry Loop was previously a "Tech school." During that time, the campus enrolled primarily males in technology-focused programs. The typical student was about 24 years of age with some community college or work experience. DeVry Loop has since moved away from that image as it has evolved into more of a graduate business school. Currently, the campus is dominated by females, higher numbers of nontraditional-aged adult students, and an increased interest in business programs. The current vision of DeVry University is that DeVry Loop develop into more of a traditional university serving larger numbers of undergraduates.

Students Served

The typical DeVry Chicago student body is highly diverse with respect to age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, international and national culture, first language, and the segment of the city they come from. But generally all are from families of low socioeconomic status (SES) and many are first-generation college-goers, as high as 75%. At all three campuses visited, the student demographic at the institution was described as majority-minority or traditionally underrepresented students. Most students were described as needing substantial financial support (nearly 80% low-income) and most are first-generation students. Students were also described by staff as academically underprepared; faculty indicated that a high percentage of students need developmental coursework in math and English (the exact percentage is not available).

In addition to academic and financial needs, staff and faculty cited students' personal challenges such as disciplinary issues, a lack of support at home, need for basic study skills and time management as well as a lack of motivation. Staff also indicated that students often lacked basic needs such as transportation to campus. In some cases, students who stopped attending class were difficult to reach because of temporary residences or non-working telephone numbers. In addition, many students do not have regular access to the Internet or email outside of DeVry.

At Chicago Main, the student body varies with the time of day. Adult students primarily attend class in the evenings (after 7 p.m.), while the age is skewed much younger during the day due to that campus' DeVry University Advantage Academy (DUAA) program

which enrolls local high school students. Chicago Main experienced a recent 20% increase in high school student enrollment, likely as a result of the expanded recruitment efforts that target more high schools with information about the offerings at DeVry, including DUAA.

DeVry staff noted that the institution has always focused on this population of students who did not have equal access to higher education opportunities, and who needed extra encouragement and support throughout the education process.

Campus Culture

DeVry recognizes that its mission is different than more traditional four-year institutions, and strives to fill a gap by providing education to students otherwise underserved. According to some, DeVry plays an important role in society by serving inner-city youth who would not otherwise have the opportunity to enter postsecondary education. Several administrators mentioned the philosophy of "doing well by doing good." One of the campus presidents expressed a strong belief that first-generation students have a stronger desire to learn and, based on her experiences, are perhaps more appreciative of their educational opportunities than more privileged peers.

Staff and faculty describe the culture at DeVry as "supportive" and "collective." Many also described this culture of collaboration as a willingness to contribute to the institution beyond one's job description. As one administrator said, "We all do everyone's job." Campus executive committees representing the IT department, career services, admissions, and student central, enrollment services, human resources, academic departments, financial aid, the business office and the president meet biweekly to learn about each department's activities.

One of the campus presidents noted that DeVry is willing to "reinvest" its resources to fix problems and concerns that may impede the institution from achieving better results. He has worked extensively at both for-profit and not-for-profit institutions and expressed confidence in the competency of his staff and faculty, describing them as the "smartest folks I've worked with." Some faculty and staff have been at DeVry Chicago as long as 15 to 20 years, and exhibit a desire to help students succeed. He feels that not only staff but also faculty have "stepped up" to provide support.

Dual Enrollment

StartNow is a program for high school seniors who have applied and been accepted into DeVry, enabling them to take classes early without cost. Students take up to two courses in cohorts and are supported by success coaches. Passport2College is a similar dual-enrollment program available to students in their junior and senior years of high school. Another outreach offering is “crash a class,” a class shadowing experience available during holiday breaks. Administrators match prospective DeVry students with current DeVry students based on career interests. The idea is to expose high school students to DeVry coursework and allow them to determine whether the institution is the right fit. Both programs are free and recruiters feel “the best marketing is to let kids try DeVry.” A study is currently underway by The University of Chicago to assess DeVry’s dual-enrollment programs.

DUAA / One unique program serving low-income, first-generation high school students at DeVry Chicago Main is the DeVry University Advantage Academy (DUAA). In addition to providing dual enrollment opportunities to disadvantaged students from Chicago Public Schools (CPS), DUAA promotes high school recruitment to DeVry. DUAA evolved from an initiative led by now-U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan in his role as CEO/Superintendent of CPS and then-Mayor Richard Daley to move more graduating CPS students into jobs. The original purpose was for graduating CPS students to earn associate’s degrees in network communications and web graphic design. Nearly 20% of pilot participants found jobs as a result of the program. The thought was simply to find jobs for disadvantaged youth, but the unintended consequence was that 90% of students graduated with an associate’s degree. The majority pursued Bachelor of Science degrees elsewhere, while thirty percent continued towards a bachelor’s degree at DeVry. More than 800 students have graduated from DUAA.

DUAA is endorsed, and was initially financially supported, by CPS. CPS continues to fund the high school portion of the program and its faculty. CPS faculty teach the high school classes at DUAA, and CPS funds the high school portion of the program. Beginning in 2009-10, DeVry helped pay for the high school program as well, since CPS did not have sufficient funding. CPS originally spent \$5,000 per student but due to CPS budget pressures, the university and the CPS agreed to a temporary reduction that requires CPS

to fund just \$1,000 while maintaining the highly successful program. Nearly all (94%) of DUAA students graduate, compared to just over half (57%) of CPS students. Given that some students entered DUAA with a 2.5 GPA, many believe the success rate is high. Already replicated in Columbus, Ohio, DeVry is looking to make DUAA available in other cities across the country, partnering with America’s Promise Alliance to create additional new sites over the next three years.

DUAA is set up as a traditional high school within the DeVry Chicago Main campus, on its own floor designated within the same building where college students take classes. DUAA students participate in extracurricular activities as well, including a prom and yearbook. Most classes operate during the week in a three-hour program with students bussed on to campus. DUAA has its own dedicated college success coach and tutors. Attendance is a high priority and is tracked, given the intensity of the college courses.

Senior DUAA students mentor juniors, and class sizes are kept small to allow students and teachers to know one another by name. Incoming DUAA students attend an orientation with team-building activities and a mixer for students to get to know one another. Evaluations are conducted monthly to discuss intervention issues such as pregnancy, drugs, behavior, homelessness, as well as academic issues and parental expectations of students’ future work.

CPS circulates information about DUAA to parents and requires parental involvement at DUAA information session. Students must first meet CPS freshman and sophomore coursework requirements. Students then take a DeVry entrance exam and, if they pass the test at standard level, they are accepted. Many begin at Chicago Main in the summer before their junior or senior year.

The 2010-2011 class of 221 students is the 8th cohort. Student demographics are typical of CPS – highly diverse with a large percentage of minorities; 35% are African American, 30% are Hispanic, and 20% are Asian. The 221 CPS students are enrolled in 11th and 12th grades with an equal mix of male and female students. Students we met with felt confident in their likelihood of graduating on time and expressed general satisfaction with the program, while noting two challenges. One is adapting to the level and intensity of college coursework in a dual-enrollment program. Students coming from CPS are exposed to college-level coursework

immediately upon matriculating at DeVry. Advisors provide degree plans that help students determine which courses they will need to take each semester in order to graduate on time and “not lose any money.”

DeVry appeals to students with its emphasis on practical, experiential education over theory. The faculty place an emphasis on concrete skills that can be readily applied to the workforce over abstract thinking. Over one-third (35%) of course content is “hands-on” or “real world.” DeVry’s class size and flexible scheduling also appeal to its students. Even introductory-level courses are rarely over 25 students, and students appreciate that. Students who had previously attended larger public institutions described feeling overwhelmed by their size. Flexible class scheduling appeals to low-income students, many of whom work and/or are non-traditional aged with families. DeVry offers classes online, at night, and on weekends.

The courses are arranged so students have a choice of three delivery types: 1) on-site, face-to-face classroom instruction, 2) classroom instruction combined with online engagement (“blended learning”), and 3) online instruction. The blended course method is “learning on your own, but not learning alone.” DeVry has been moving some of its coursework in this direction since 2009. DeVry is currently examining which mode is best suited for students in first-year courses.

The courses are posted online in “shells” within a central portal, and students have online access to most course materials and assignments. Even course books are available as e-books, for a small fee, and students can have live Internet chats with faculty. This is all part of DeVry’s initiative to go paperless.

Students also have the option of taking courses at other campuses. Students are admitted for either on campus or online instruction, but can engage in a mix of course delivery methods. Faculty assess student performance by: a) participation – quality and quantity, b) weekly assignments, c) projects, and d) quizzes and tests.

Developmental Coursework / Incoming students who have not taken the SAT or ACT are required to take an institutional placement test. The test assesses skills in four areas: reading,

writing, arithmetic, and algebra. Depending on placement scores, students may be required to take and pass a free, basic course in English and math before officially entering DeVry. Once students complete Foundations courses with a passing grade, they are eligible for admittance to DeVry and must move through two levels of remedial-level coursework before enrolling in credit-level English and math. The staff we met with estimated that approximately half of the students who take the Foundations courses eventually attend DeVry.

Foundations courses also have time management and study skill development components. Students in Foundations classes work closely with instructors and participate in community-building through simple perks such as donuts or lunch to draw students to the room. In a recent Foundations class at Chicago Main, the pass rate more than doubled from 40% to 85% due to this increased emphasis on promoting community in the classroom, a more supportive faculty, and following up with students by phone to provide additional encouragement.

Students who are enrolled in pre-admission Foundations courses in English and math have access to free, open computer labs as well as test-taking classes. Chicago Main estimates that 30% take advantage of this opportunity, although no data exist yet to support that figure. Math is noted as the major challenge, but the university would like to examine participation rates more closely to gauge the effectiveness of these additional support structures.

Faculty Involvement / Many faculty told us they relate personally to the unique needs of their diverse students, and feel strongly about supporting them both in the classroom and more informally as mentors. Students described faculty as “approachable,” and “human.” One student said “they talk to you like you are their next door neighbor.” Others said “they don’t belittle you” and “they don’t wear their titles.” Some faculty and staff stressed the non-formal education experience of coaching and mentoring, and confidence-building – rather than strictly interacting through material taught in class.

DeVry deans select faculty—both full-time and adjuncts—carefully. They are not interested in the research capabilities of faculty, but rather place emphasis on teaching skills. Deans base

instructor promotions primarily on the level of student support and engagement. Deans expect faculty to adhere to an attitude that student success—not failure—is a measure of their ability.

Of DeVry’s 3,250 onsite and online faculty members, approximately one-fifth (23%) are full-time while the remaining 2,500 teach either as visiting professors or independent contractors. DeVry requires that 60% of its full-time undergraduate credit hours be taught by full-time faculty. DeVry documents faculty expectations, responsibilities and three pathways that faculty can follow: a purely academic career path, academic leadership positions, or non-academic leadership positions. All Assistant Professors must have a master’s degree from a regionally accredited institution, 3-5 years business or industry experience appropriate to subject matter and previous teaching experience.

The students appreciate that many of their faculty bring directly relevant working experience from the field in which they teach. Faculty often work part-time in industries of interest to their students, and some have attended DeVry, including the Keller Graduate School of Business. Beyond coursework, students shared stories about professors taking an active interest in their personal lives. Faculty often make phone calls to students at home to ask why they had missed class. Overall, a general consensus emerged that faculty take an active interest in student learning at DeVry.

Advising: One-Stop Shop Model

Student Central is a newly implemented joint-advising strategy offering students combined financial consulting and academic advising through one central location. Before Student Central, one student support advisor provided both academic and financial advisement. This arrangement did not seem sufficient to support students. With Student Central, pairs of specialized, designated financial aid “consultants” and academic advising “coaches” together provide holistic student advising. Student Central launched in 2010 as the consolidation of three departments: campus life, which includes international student services, disability, crime reporting and judicial reviews; academic advising; and, financial aid.

Currently, student success coach and financial aid consultant teams, or “pods,” have a case load of about 250 students each.

Advising is a large resource and said to account for about 20% of costs. The advising teams communicate not only with their assigned students but also with each other to better understand the various challenges facing each student. Students are served in a walk-in or appointment basis. One of the directors of Student Advisement, a former TRIO professional, compared the current Student Central model at DeVry as being very similar to what she oversaw in TRIO.

Student Success Coaches are expected to take on an intrusive and proactive role. They call the student each week during the first term. The goal is to take a proactive stance with first-generation students who are unfamiliar with the college process by asking students if they have any questions. Coaches have found that if they establish a relationship through weekly calls, students will be more willing to open up and discuss their problems. Beyond the first term they transition to biweekly calls, then one call every four weeks, to one call at the beginning of each session.

Student Success Coaches also help develop each student’s academic roadmap, which they review together each semester. The coaches help students choose classes and stay with each student from the beginning to the end of their studies at DeVry. Student success coaches are trained to be proactive by identifying students who are not progressing based on grades and degree tracking. Student success coaches do not provide tutoring, but they do make appointments on students’ behalf or provide them with contact information for tutors in subjects such as finance, science, and math. Coaches also meet with professors to help identify students struggling through specific coursework. Finally, coaches reach out to students on academic appeal to discuss the seriousness and implications for outcomes and student aid. Coaches, along with faculty, will then reevaluate the student’s plan and make changes as needed to their schedule. Newly implemented bi-weekly team meetings further reassess student progress.

The financial advisors work with students to ensure that they have adequate funding for their classes. Students learn how much their education costs and what they are responsible for paying. Financial advisors explain to students the differences between loans, grants, and scholarships, help students seek sources of aid, assist them in applying for aid, and help them understand how financial aid works. The financial advisor meets with students during the

positions. The career services office communicates the options for off-campus jobs with financial aid consultants, who make students aware of opportunities in their area of interest – for example at the Boys and Girls Club, or the Chicago Museum of History. The financial aid office also works collaboratively with the registrar’s office on a centralized e-finance system to support student enrollment verification and income considerations for student loan packaging.

The financial aid office conducts exit interviews for graduating students to discuss loan repayment, and provides them with information about how much they owe and how to avoid going into default. While financial aid does not “delve much into how to balance one’s lifestyle,” they do want students to understand not to borrow more than is needed for their school term.

If a student withdraws, their financial aid consultant will conduct an exit interview, advise the student about the six-month repayment schedule and encourage the student to come back. The institution also reaches out to first-year withdrawals during their grace period to provide additional repayment reminders and guidance, and tracks borrowers through their cohort period. Financial aid consultants sometimes make attempts to intervene if students fall delinquent in repaying their college loans. Every semester the campuses conduct campaigns to bring back students who withdrew.

Career Placement

Another source of support at DeVry is job placement and career services. Career services staff provide workshops on topics such as communication skills and networking, and conduct mock job interviews. Career service staff are required to stay in touch with graduates for six months following graduation to track their job search progress. DeVry cites a 90% job placement rate within six months of graduation for students who actively seek employment.

In recent years, due to economic decline and resulting lack of job offers for graduating students, DeVry has increased its calls to students, to encourage them to visit the career services office for support and boost their self-esteem. DeVry also solicits support from faculty in facilitating networking practice with students through luncheons, meetings and presentations.

Students comment that their career development coaches link degree plans to information about job openings and upcoming job fairs. Academic clubs on campus assist students with networking opportunities. The Cyber-Security club, for example, helps place students in jobs at the Department of Defense and consulting firms, among others. Clubs also provide opportunities for presentations at conferences and competitions.

The majority (86%) of graduates are employed in their fields, but only students actively seeking employment are included in employment statistics. Chicago campuses have a particular advantage in the job market because DeVry was founded and is headquartered there, and students are exposed to a large network of local graduates who furnish them with advice and help them find jobs. Employer liaisons work with area companies in fields such as consulting and pharmaceuticals, to develop training programs for graduates.

Social Support

Extracurricular activities vary by campus. At the Loop, for example, which is in the city and dominated by older, working and graduate-level students, the only official student activity is a softball team. Due to the small campus size, DeVry Loop is seen as a close-knit environment, providing students with a sense of belonging. The campus often organizes community service opportunities, such as volunteer events at soup kitchens.

Chicago Main, which has a larger traditional-aged student body, seeks to create a more collegiate environment where students want to spend time outside of class. The campus currently has a soccer team and student government offered to both high school and college students. The campus also celebrates events such as Hispanic Heritage Month and provides seminars, for example, on healthy eating. Additionally, the campus recently developed the Metro Leadership Program, which provides diversity training, work-life balance and time management skills, and team building. Thirty-five low-income students with an expected family contribution (EFC) of \$0-500 were invited to participate in the pilot and are referred to as “trailblazers,” to put a positive spin on their first-generation status by emphasizing their driving motivation and determination.

This is to be expected from a for-profit institution interested in benefiting from the success of its students; however, as an institution providing opportunity to low-income students who were academically underprepared, one wonders if this practice limits their true potential. It is possible that DeVry provides an education that prepares its graduates to attend the most selective institutions in the country to receive their master’s degrees or PhD’s. While the support currently offered to students at DeVry is encouraging, it would be a disservice not to better inform students about the options available to them upon graduation.

The policies and programs identified in our site visits to DeVry Chicago campuses instill confidence that four-year for-profit institutions have real potential to better serve low-income, first-generation students. Staff, administrators and faculty all seem keenly aware of the challenges particular to this student population, and continually work to improve support structures. Many of the promising practices identified herein are relatively new, and we look forward to learning about their impact on student success.

Recommendations

Based on our many years of studying the characteristics of successful institutional practices to support low-income, first-generation students, we found that the types of services provided to students at the three DeVry University campuses establish a high standard for strategic academic and social student assistance. The following three categories frame what we recommend as DeVry University’s promising student support practices:

- *Approaching Support Services for Students as Customer Service*
- *Providing Early, In-Depth, On-Campus Student Opportunities*
- *Establishing and Sustaining a Shared Sense of Community*

These three overarching categories are distinctive because of the way in which the dynamic confluence of corporate business values and higher education practices come together to inform DeVry’s educational culture. What is most promising about these

categories is the calculated investment that DeVry University has made to weave together the practices and how they continue to develop and refine their strategies for helping students persist and graduate.

Approaching Support Services for Students as Customer Service

Our research has shown that the success of many higher-performing colleges and universities is attributed to the personalization of the educational experience for low-income, first-generation students. In other words, valuing students as a corporate business appreciates its customers can establish an effective college success culture, especially for low-income, first-generation students. For DeVry, providing “world class customer service” entails treating students with “kindness and respect, taking the initiative to solve problems, and do simple things like walk students to classes or services they cannot find.” Moreover, students at DeVry express that they appreciate feeling valued as a “customer,” and receiving individualized attention from the staff, administrators and faculty.

Several observed elements of DeVry’s promising practices for approaching support services as customer service include:

- **One-Stop Shop Advising Model:** Student Central is a newly implemented joint advising strategy, offering students combined financial consulting and academic advising through one office. The designated financial aid “consultant” and academic advising “coach” advise individual students together in teams, resulting in holistic support.
- **Early Intervention/Warning System:** During the third week of each session, faculty post the first set of grades online via the course management software system, and continually update grades in the system. Faculty then report students whose grades fall below a C average on a weekly basis. Registrars send academic warning reports to both coaches and instructors to alert them that students need additional support which triggers needed advising, tutoring and the creation of an individualized plan of action for the student.

DeVry establishes and sustains a shared sense of community in the following ways:

- ***Collaborative Campus Programming:*** Campus executive committees representing the IT department, career services, admissions, student central, enrollment services, human resources, academic departments, financial aid, the business office and the president meet biweekly to learn about each department's activities. These meetings foster a culture of collaboration which motivates as a willingness to contribute to the institution beyond one's job description. As one administrator said, "We all do everyone's job."
- ***Faculty Involvement:*** Expressing confidence in the competency of his staff and faculty, one DeVry President describes them as the "smartest folks I've worked with." Some faculty and staff have been at DeVry University Chicago for up to 15-20 years, and continue to exhibit a strong desire to help students succeed. Thus, many faculty attend orientation to make students more comfortable interacting with and approaching them. Moreover, many of the DeVry faculty expressed a connection with the first-generation college student, having received their educations at DeVry, and feeling a sense of responsibility to support students' educational opportunities and future work goals. Some faculty and deans described the opportunity to serve these students as a "privilege," enabling them to enact social justice on a daily basis.

Implications for Policy and Research

Because higher education institutions must become more competitive in enrolling and successfully graduating more low-income, first-generation students in order for our country to increase the number students with college degrees, education policy should be designed to incentivize campuses that implement an array of student support services such as those that we found as promising practices at DeVry University. Further research should explore the efficacy of such practices identified, as data become available.

Implications for Institutions

While data are not yet available that can determine the effectiveness of DeVry's supportive practices, similar institutions should consider the strategies guiding the implementation of these services, which are grounded in the literature on effectively supporting low-income, first-generation students. Other four-year, for-profit institutions can learn from the implementation of supportive practices within a similar structure and framework. Investing resources in such services—particularly if those services are tied to higher success rates—can help for-profit institutions validate their high tuition costs.

Implications for Parents, Guardians and/or Students

Because of the high cost of tuition at for-profit institutions, parents, guardians and students should expect that in addition to adequate financial aid, any for-profit higher education institution they consider attending offers the range of student support services for low-income and first-generation students that constitute the promising practices at DeVry University, at minimum.

Implications for Counselors and College Access Professionals

Because of how important "college match" has become in the college selection and decision process for low-income and first-generation students, pre-college counselors and other College Access and Success professionals need to advise their students to become better informed about the promising student support service practices such as those established at DeVry University, as a key measure in their college match criteria.

Recommendations for Improvement

Based on experience studying the characteristics of successful institutional practices to support low-income, first-generation students, we found evidence that the types of supportive practices known to be successful at other institutions are either in the early stages or already a part of the culture at DeVry University. While the findings we present identify a number of promising practices that support students at a for-profit institution, the current graduation rates leave room for improvement. Just under a third of first-time, full-time students at DeVry with baccalaureate aspirations complete a bachelor’s degree within six years (30%). When comparing this rate to institutions serving similar populations of low-income students, however (defined as 30% or more receiving federal grants), DeVry’s rate is only slightly behind four-year public institutions’ rate of 41%.

DeVry is making strides in better supporting its population high at risk of attrition, and shows promise for continued improvement through the recent implementation of innovative services. Given DeVry’s recent efforts to boost graduation rates through increased support including the Student Central initiative, degree tracking and early alert systems, it will be interesting to revisit the graduation rates once data reflecting institutional efforts become available. In the meantime, further research must explore the other side of the story, by reaching out to students who did not make it to graduation.

We recommend several improvements for DeVry University to enhance their practices and contribute strategically to their efforts to increase their student retention and success rates:

- ***Expand the use of disaggregated data to track the outcomes of low-income, first-generation students.*** Currently, DeVry institutes marketing measures typical of for-profit corporations to track levels of student engagement and satisfaction. While the student-as-customer philosophy may be effective at providing students with attentive and customized support, the university should implement more traditional postsecondary institutional measures of tracking student success. The university’s current focus on term-to-term persistence rates should be expanded to include year-to-year persistence and six-year

graduation rates for four-year degree seekers. DeVry does report these figures as required to IPEDS for first-year, full-time students only. Internally, however, leaders need to shift the focus of staff awareness from short-term persistence rates to longer-term six-year graduation rates, disaggregated to allow for insights into the ‘typical’ DeVry student. This will allow DeVry to establish and track targets of success for student groups of interest including those who are low-income, first-generation, and non-traditional aged, to assess the outcomes of this population high in need and dominant at the institution.

- ***Establish greater transparency around student services and outcomes.*** The DeVry practices identified here, while supportive, are invisible to the average consumer through publicly available materials such as the institution’s website. Without conducting in-person visits, one may not be aware of institutional scholarships or initiatives such as Student Central. Additionally, information about student success rates – both overall and tied to recently implemented support practices – is not easily obtainable. Such information is critical to meeting the needs of students, parents, and educators as they navigate the College Access process.
- ***Clarify and reconsider rigid attendance tracking policies – while closely monitoring low-income, first-generation students, who are generally at-risk of dropping out; this is crucial and the students with whom we met were unclear about attendance withdrawal policies.*** In addition, the students – many of whom are nontraditional-aged working adults with families – felt the policies bordered on the overly intrusive. DeVry academic sessions are short and intensive and therefore require regular class attendance. However, if a student misses two classes, he or she is automatically dropped and must obtain a faculty letter within one week to appeal the withdrawal process and be reinstated. Students had varying understandings of the exact number of excused absences allowed and the time allotted for appeals. In addition, students did not know whether they could attend class during the appeals process, thereby potentially missing an additional week of class.

While this policy has good intentions, it must be communicated more clearly during orientation or through the mandatory academic advising sessions with Student Central. Students must be informed of the risks and financial ramifications. In addition, DeVry may wish to reconsider the process of communicating warnings to students and opportunities for making up a class by meeting with faculty in person or online, or by reviewing material at the tutoring center. DeVry can begin examining this policy by analyzing the effects of absences and withdrawals on overall success rates.

- ***Consider implementing additional programs and services supported by the research, such as learning communities and supplemental instruction, proven to be effective for this student population in other sectors.*** DeVry has already taken significant steps to better support low-income, first-generation students. Once external evaluators can determine the effectiveness of recently implemented support systems within DeVry's for-profit structure, the university can more easily incorporate additional mechanisms that facilitate student success.
- ***Strategically acknowledge staff and faculty who excel in their efforts to support low-income, first-generation students.*** While DeVry staff and faculty generally seem to embrace the need to support this student population, systematically formalizing the acknowledgement and rewarding personnel who embed this support into their everyday practice would further cultivate promising practices on their campus.

Appendices

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Appendices

B. Interview Protocols

Staff and Faculty Interview Guide

Introduction

We are currently conducting site visits to DeVry Chicago campuses as part of a study on the approaches to college admission, academic and social support, persistence and graduation of low-income, first generation students at your institution.

- This study is sought by your institution’s leadership to better address any challenges to supporting the educational advancement of low-income, first-generation students.
- We would like to gain further insight into what programs and practices your institution has implemented to support low-income, first-generation students.
- Please note that we are interested in learning about the institution as a whole but would like to focus in particular on low-income, first-generation and disadvantaged students.
- All responses will remain anonymous unless you give us permission to be named in the report.

All staff/faculty

1. Please describe your position/department and responsibilities here at the university. How many staff report to you? How is success within your department defined? What is success for you?
2. Describe a “typical” student at DeVry Chicago?
(prompt if needed) For example: average age, residence, educational background, work/enrollment patterns, SES, family, other demographics, course load, involvement on campus, etc.)
3. Do you interact on a daily basis with low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented/disadvantaged students? How so?
4. Do you know the success rates of this population (compared with other, non-low-income students)? If so are you pleased with those rates? Do you think any challenges exist to producing high rates of retention and graduation of low-income students?

5. What is the institutional commitment to this population? Has it been expressed? If so, how?

6. What academic or personal support is provided on campus for underserved, low-income, first-generation students? What challenges are different for this population vs. all others?

(prompt if needed) For example: academic intervention; counseling or advising; tutoring or mentoring; institutional policies; instructional approaches such as learning communities or supplemental instruction; scheduling flexibility; class size/ratio; full-time faculty; extracurricular activities; etc.

7. What are DeVry University’s approaches to recruiting underserved, low-income and first-generation students? How are these students targeted in high schools? Are there special pre-college programs developed to attract and support these students in the application process? What are admissions requirements, including any academic measures? What recruiting approaches are different for this population vs. all others?

8. Are there any institution-wide goals or policies that affect recruitment, retention or graduation of low-income students?

(prompt if needed) For example, the institutional mission, any retention committees or strategic plans?

9. Are any incentives in place that encourage the support of low-income students? Does the college receive resources or recognition based on its retention or completion rates?

10. Can you think of any “stories” of extraordinary institutional or faculty effort to help ensure the success of low-income students?

11. Is there any department collaboration? What about other external collaborators?

12. What are post-graduation outcomes of low-income DeVry University students, both financially and in terms of job placement? Do you hear from alumni who have entered the workforce? What have been their experiences? Do you disaggregate student data by income to consider any of these questions?

Institutional Research

18. Please describe your institution using data from institutional profiles, IPEDS data, institutional studies, fact books, etc.— size, student body characteristics, full/part time enrollment rates, main academic programs, main transfer programs, organization of college, faculty, etc. (whatever you think is critical).

- Also include financial data including per FTE student expenditures, annual budget with relative shares for administrative and instructional costs, tuition costs and share of resources from tuition, physical setting.
- Show trends where possible. Describe results of institutional studies of student characteristics, performance, and outcomes; instruction; services; etc.
- What experiences and academic backgrounds, educational objectives, needs, etc. do students bring to the institution?
- Do you disaggregate student data by income to consider any outcome issues? If so, what issues or concerns have been raised for policy consideration?
- Is institutional and student data used to identify problems or measure progress?

Closing

What additional considerations should we be aware of while conducting this site visit? Is there any other place on this campus you would recommend we visit?

Data/report request: We are interested in collecting any data, documentation or studies you may have regarding the characteristics, experiences and outcomes of your students. We have signed a confidentiality agreement with the institution and would appreciate any assistance you can provide in helping us develop a profile of your institution for the final report.

Appendices

B. Interview Protocols

Student Interview Guide

Introduction

We would like to learn more about your experiences here at DeVry, as well as your graduation and career plans. We will be asking you a series of questions about your interactions with staff and faculty, and participation in various programs and services. Please know that while we may ask your name in this interview, it is only to help us clarify responses, but your responses will remain anonymous in the final report.

1. First, we would like to begin by collecting some basic information from you – your age, where you are from, enrollment status (full or part-time), program or major, educational goals, and year expected to graduate, and if applicable, number of hours that you work.
2. How long have you been enrolled at this institution? Was this the first college you attended? If not, what other institutions have you attended?
3. When did you first learn about DeVry? Were you ever approached by a recruiter? Was this the first college of your choice? If not, what were your other choices and why did you select DeVry?
4. For those of you who recently graduated from high school, did you participate in any DeVry pre-college programs such as the Advantage Academy?
5. What were your educational goals when you entered this college? Have they changed? If so, how?
6. Did you receive advising on which courses to take when you first entered the institution? Was that advice helpful? Do you continue to receive academic advising?
7. Have you received any other form of academic or personnel support? Please share.
(prompt if needed) For example, mentoring, tutoring, counseling, etc. What prompted you to get this support?

8. Do you receive financial aid? If so, grants, loans, or both? Has the financial aid office been helpful in finding sources of aid to cover the cost of your education? How so?
9. Do you participate in any extracurricular activities on campus? What are they? Do they help or hinder your educational goals? How so?
10. Are there any specific courses that you have struggled to complete? Please list and explain why you feel you are struggling.
11. What specific challenges, if any, have you faced towards completing your degree?
(prompt if needed) For example: time/competing priorities outside of class such as family or work, problems navigating the campus or paperwork, challenging coursework, etc.
12. What have been your most positive experiences at the institution?
(prompt if needed) For example: any specific faculty or staff member/offices or programs/classes or activities, etc.
13. What are your plans for graduation and work? Is support offered to assist you with placement?

Thank you again for your time, we appreciate your feedback. Please be assured that your responses will remain anonymous and do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns.

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